

## ZACHARIAH “ZACH” THOMPSON (1837 – 1882)

**Z**achariah (Zach) Thompson was born in St Louis County, Missouri about 1837, exact date unknown, the son of William Thompson and Nancy Bacon Thompson. We know nothing of his childhood except as it relates to his movements with the family.

In 1846 his family started to Texas. On the trip west, his father died, and according to accounts, “...was buried on the plains”. They continued west, settling near present-day Sherman in Grayson County, Texas. Zach’s mother, Nancy, remarried in 1850 to Uriah Burns, also of Grayson County, Texas.

It is known that in 1853 Fielding Bacon, Nancy’s brother, left Sherman and started for California by wagon train. It is a matter of debate, but I believe Zach probably accompanied his mother and her husband, Uriah Burns, to California at this time. One of Fielding Bacon’s grandsons mentions that it was the Burns family decision to come to California in 1853. Zach’s older brother, Pleasant Thompson, and his family did not come to California until 1856.

Uriah and Nancy Bacon Thompson Burns settled near what is today, Salinas, California sometime between 1853 and 1856. Accounts say that they “wintered in the Los Angeles area” in 1853. It is known that Fielding Bacon bought property in the El Monte, California area and began a ranching operation in 1853. They may have stayed in the Los Angeles area for a while, so it is not known just when they went to Salinas. The census of 1860 finds Zach living with his mother and stepfather in Salinas. In the “Great Voter Register of Monterey County in 1866” we find Zach Thompson listed with his brothers, Pleasant and Hardy Thompson.



About 1867 Zach married Isabella Richardson, daughter of William Brenner Richardson and Maria Josepha Soberanes of Soledad, California. About 1846 William Richardson and his wife, Josepha, built an adobe house on property given to them by Josepha’s father, Feliciano Soberanes, on the banks of the Salinas River. This little Rancho became known as Los Cochinos\*. The house later became a stopping place on

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\* *The Rancho’s original name had been “los Cochinos” or “the pigs”. Over time, it was changed to “los Coches” — probably because it became a stagecoach stop on the Coast line.*

the stage route between San Francisco and Los Angeles. In 2000, the house, though long abandoned, is still standing, just south of the town of Soledad, California, along the edge of the southbound lanes of Highway 101 near the turnoff to Arroyo Seco.

In the census of 1870 Zach Thompson is listed in Salinas along with his mother, Nancy, and his brother, Hardy, as hotel keepers. A directory of Monterey County in 1875 lists Zach Thompson with a C. Burns (Thomas Coke Burns was his younger half brother) as hotel keepers. The 1879 Directory lists Zach Thompson as the Salinas City Marshall.

The census of 1880 lists Zach Thompson, age 43 years, born in Missouri, occupation, Detective. Wife Isabella. Aged 34 years, born in California. Children: Arabella Thompson, 12 years, William Thompson, 8 years and Elbert 1 year.

Zach Thompson, acting in his capacity as Salinas City Marshall was shot by an escaping prisoner. He died a few days later and was buried on December 16, 1882 in Salinas at what is today known as "The Garden of Memories" Cemetery.

According to a letter sent to Winifred Thompson Ames, written by Mrs. Elberta Payne of San Francisco (the granddaughter of Zach Thompson and daughter of Elbert Thompson), Isabella remained in Salinas for a period of time but then moved to live with her uncle, General Mariano Vallejo in Sonoma. She relates that the Zach's murder must have affected Isabella's mind, for she remained eccentric for the rest of her life. She did not want her children to marry or live "normal" lives. Mrs. Payne states "They were a strange family." Isabella died just short of her 102nd birthday in 1939 and is buried beside her husband in Salinas along with two of their children, Elbert and Edwin Thompson.

It has also been noted that Zach Thompson was a 32nd degree Mason and was a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge in Salinas.

### Regarding Zach's children:

1. There were two **ELBERTS** in this family. The first one died very young. He was a favorite of his father. When another son was born later, he was named Elbert also. This second Elbert was the father of **ELBERTA "BILLIE" THOMPSON PAYNE**. "Billie" had two children: **BARBARA** and **HARRY**. Harry was a policeman with the San Francisco Police Department (1966).
2. **WILLIAM THOMPSON** was born about 1872, probably in Salinas. Nothing much is known about him except that he married late in life and had two sons, William and Jack, and in 1966 all this family were dead. It is not known if the sons had children.
3. **ARABELLA THOMPSON** was born about 1868, probably in Salinas. She married 1) a McLeod, and 2) a cousin, a Soberanes. Second marriage was not successful.
4. **EDWIN THOMPSON** died quite young and is buried with his parents in The Garden of Memories in Salinas.
5. **ELAINE THOMPSON** – no information beyond that mentioned in the writings of Walter Coke Thompson.